

A note on the (non-existing) passive in Matengo

Jenneke van der Wal, University of Cambridge

1. Introduction

Matengo is a Bantu language spoken in the South-West of Tanzania, N13 in Guthrie's (1948) classification. Much like other Bantu languages it has SVO canonical word order, a noun class system, and extensive verbal morphology for derivation and inflection, as illustrated in (1).

(Yoneda 2011: 768)

- (1) Maríá ju-í-mu-som-il-a Tómasi ki-tâ:bo.¹
1.Maria 1SM-FUT-1OM-read-APPL-FS 1.Thomas 7-book
'Maria is going to read a book to Thomas.'

Many of the familiar derivational suffixes on the verb exist and are productive in Matengo, such as the causative or applicative. The latter is the *-il-* suffix shown above in (1). In addition, most other Bantu languages also have a passive derivational suffix, illustrated in (2b) for Swahili *-w-*. However, Matengo lacks this morpheme.

Swahili

- (2) a. Juma a-li-pik-a ugali.
1.Juma 1SM-PAST-cook-FV 14.ugali
'Juma cooked ugali.'
- b. Ugali u-li-pik-w-a (na Juma).
14.ugali 14SM-PAST-cook-PASS-FV by Juma
'Ugali was cooked (by Juma).'

In the contexts where a passive construction may be expected to occur, Matengo has four strategies at its disposal: 1. a stative extension on the verb, as shown in (3); 2. verb-subject inversion, as in (5); 3. a third person plural (3PL) active sentence with subject marking in class 2, as in (5); and 4. object fronting, as shown in both (4) and (5).

- (3) lindilíísá li-hogul-ík-í nu ũwáai
5.window 5SM-open-STAT-PFV by 14.wind
'the window was opened by the wind'

¹ Numbers in glosses refer to noun classes, and to person when followed by sg or pl. High tones are marked with an acute accent and low tones are unmarked.

- (4) lindilísá ju-hogw-i Jóni
 5.window 1SM-open-PFV 1.John
 ‘the window has been opened by John’ (lit. ‘the window, John opened’)
- (5) lindilísá a-hógw-i
 5.window 2SM-open-PFV
 ‘the window was opened’ (lit. ‘they opened the window’)

These strategies in Matengo have not been described in detail or compared systematically in the light of their role as “functional passives”. The first aim of this paper is thus to provide a descriptive overview of the properties of these strategies. The stative, subject inversion and the 3PL strategies are described in sections 2, 3, and 4, respectively, while object fronting can be combined with each of the strategies, and as such does not have a separate section but is discussed in sections 3 and 4.

A second aim of the paper is to put these data into perspective with respect to the prototypical syntactic properties and information-structural functions of passives. The discussion is deliberately left descriptive and as theory-neutral as possible. The passive is typically described as a construction “display[ing] the following five properties:

- it contrasts with another construction, the active;
- the subject of the active corresponds to a non-obligatory oblique phrase of the passive or is not overtly expressed;
- the subject of the passive, if there is one, corresponds to the direct object of the active;
- the construction is pragmatically restricted relative to the active;
- the construction displays some special morphological marking of the verb.” (Siewierska 2013)

According to this description, as will be shown, only the stative strategy in Matengo comes close to being a “real passive”, the other strategies would not meet the criteria. However, looking from a functional perspective, all four morphosyntactic devices in Matengo share some characteristics with passive and inverse constructions in other languages (Givón 1994:9):

- Inverse: the patient is more topical than the agent but the agent retains considerable topicality
- Passive: the patient is more topical than the agent and the agent is extremely non-topical (‘suppressed’, ‘demoted’)

The main properties regarding the functions of arguments in a passive, then, are the non-canonical status of the agent and patient. Canonically, the agent

is the subject and topic, and a non-agent is the object and included in the comment (i.e. non-topic or focus), as in Table 1.²

<i>semantic</i>	agent	non-agent
<i>syntactic</i>	subject	object
<i>information structure</i>	topic	comment

Table 1 Canonical alignment of functions

All the morphosyntactic devices related to the passive alter that alignment in one or more ways. The properties that turn out to be relevant in a comparison of the various strategies are given in (6) (inspired by Hamlaoui & Makasso 2013):

(6) Properties of passives strategies

- Syntactic: - promotion of a non-agent to subject
 - demotion of the agent
- Information-structural: - promotion of a non-agent to topic
 - demotion of the agent to non-topic

As further discussed in section 5, it turns out that only the stative comes close to resembling a prototypical passive in combining three of these four properties, whereas the 3PL strategy and the word order changes (VS, OV) each only have one of the four characteristics. Thus, whereas the English passive combines all of these four characteristics, we find that they are spread over the various strategies in Matengo. The data leading to this conclusion are discussed in the next sections.

2. Stative

Even if the passive morphology is absent in Matengo, the so-called ‘neuter’ or ‘stative’ derivational extension *-ik/-ek-* does exist. It is characterised for Bantu in general as indicating “that the subject is potentially or factually affected by the action expressed by the verb” and “no agent is implied” (Schadeberg 2003: 75). For Matengo, Yoneda (2000) indicates a variation in functions of the stative extension as ‘stative’, ‘potential’ and, crucial for our purposes, also ‘passive’. In its typical translation as ‘-able’, it frequently has the effect of deriving an intransitive predicate from a transitive one. Thus, it

² In the rest of the paper the term ‘patient’ is used to refer to any non-agent involved in a passive-like construction, which may equally be a benefactive, recipient or goal, for example.

is passive-like in a number of ways, but has not fully transformed into a passive morpheme.³

The variation in semantic and syntactic functions that Yoneda mentions for the stative is illustrated in the minimal pairs in (7)-(12).

(Yoneda 2006)

- | | | |
|------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| (7) | jogwa | ‘to hear’ |
| | jogwanika | ‘to be heard, be audible’ |
| (8) | hu:la | ‘to take off’ |
| | hu:lika | ‘to come off’ |
| (9) | baga | ‘to divide’ |
| | baganika | ‘to be dividable’ |
| (10) | jingia | ‘to poke’ |
| | jingika | ‘to be able to poke’ |
| (11) | bulunga | ‘to roll sth up’ |
| | bulungika | ‘to become rolled up’ |
| (12) | pa:la | ‘to like something’ |
| | pa:lika | ‘to be liked, to be needed’ |

The variation in meaning between the ‘ability’ reading and the passive/intransitive is also present for one and the same verb. This becomes apparent in the subject agreement on the verb: when the stative verbs take a default/impersonal agreement *ji-* (class 9), the result is a passive interpretation as in (13a,b), and when agreement is with the subject *ju-* (class 1), we only find in a modal reading as in (13c). An interpretation as raising verb, hence a passive, is not possible here.

- | | | | | | |
|------|----|---------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| (13) | a. | ji- amin-ika | dádagwá | ju-kul-ichi | hóomba ⁴ |
| | | 9SM-believe-STAT | 1.sister.POSS.1SG | 1SM-eat-PFV | 9.fish |
| | | ‘it is believed that sister ate fish’ | | | |

³ A reviewer mentions that the stative morphology has replaced the passive in other languages of zone N, such as Tumbuka.

⁴ Examples without reference were collected by the author during elicitation sessions over the course of 2013. There is free variation between *-iki* and *-ichi* as pronunciation of the perfective suffix.

- b. dáádá **ji**-amin-iká ju-kul-iki hóomba
 1.sister 9SM-believe-STAT 1SM-eat-PFV 9.fish
 ‘it is believed that sister ate fish’
- c. dádagwá **ju**-amin-iká *(kwa) kúla hóomba
 1.sister 1SM-believe-STAT PREP 15.eat 9.fish
 ‘sister is believed/believable in eating fish’
 = sister is very good at eating fish
 * ‘sister is believed to eat fish’

When the stative extension functions as a passive, it is possible to add the agent/actor in an oblique phrase, but apparently only if the agent/actor is non-volitional. The non-human agent *ũwáai* ‘wind’ is allowed in a by-phrase in (14c), but the human agent John is not (14d). The human agent Alison in (15) is allowed presumably because hearing is a non-volitional act.

- (14) a. ũwáai gu-hogw-í lindilíisa
 14.wind 14SM-open-PFV 5.window
 ‘the wind opened the window’
- b. lindilíisa li-hógul-ík-i
 5.window 5SM-open-STAT-PFV
 ‘the window has been opened’ (“we don’t know how”)
- c. lindilíisá li-hogul-ik-í nu ũwáai
 5.window 5SM-open-STAT-PFV by 14.wind
 ‘the window has been opened by the wind’
- d. * lindilíisa li-hogul-ik-í na Jóni
 5.window 5SM-open-STAT-PFV by John
 ‘the window has been opened by John’
- (15) mwaáná ju-jógw-eeeka na Álison
 1.child 1SM-hear-STAT by Alison
 ‘the child has been heard by Alison’

The restricted possibility of adding the overt agent in a prepositional phrase, together with the variable use as passive, potential and stative, shows that the stative has not completely taken the place of the general Bantu passive

morpheme *-w-* as is encountered in other Bantu languages and reconstructed for proto-Bantu (**-u-*).

3. Inversion

The second strategy used for translating passive sentences is subject-verb inversion. This can be combined with object preposing, resulting in a non-canonical (O)VS word order, as illustrated in (16). As Givón (1994:20) notes, “the double word order adjustment –fronted non-agent, post-posed agent– is characteristic of VO languages with flexible subject position, such as Spanish, Classical Arabic, Modern Greek, and many Bantu languages.” Having a preposed object is not necessary, however, as seen in (17). In this section, I first discuss the position and function of the subject, and then come back to the position and function of the object.

- (16) lindilísá ju-hogw-i Jóoni
 5.window 1SM-open-PFV 1.John
 ‘the window has been opened by John’

- (17) (‘What about Anna?’)
 ju-lap-ui Jóoni
 1SM-hit-PFV 1.John
 ‘John hit (her)’ / ‘she was hit by John’⁵

In subject inversion, the postverbal DP is the syntactic subject of the construction, determining the subject agreement on the verb. As such, it is never in a prepositional ‘by’-phrase. When translating an English “long” passive with an overt agent, in Matengo only the inversion construction is offered,⁶ never the stative extension or 3PL strategy. This is illustrated in (18): even when a question uses the 3PL strategy (as seen in the class 2 subject marker *a-*), and where we may hence expect the same strategy in the answer, the answer with an overt agent is given using an inversion construction (18b,c).

- (18) a. mootú a-súsw-i lé?
 3.fire 2SM-extinguish-PFV Q
 ‘has the fire been put out?’

⁵ It is telling that the offered Swahili translation does contain a passive: *amepigwa na John* ‘she was hit by John’.

⁶ Yoneda (2008: 111) also notes that “Matengo does not have passive construction, and sentences in OVS order are used as passive meaning. Whenever I ask to translate passive (sic) sentence in Swahili or English into Matengo, OVS sentences is (sic) replied”.

- b. ju-súsw-i dáada
 1SM-extinguish-PFV 1.sister
 ‘sister has put it out’ / ‘it was put out by sister’
- c. ji-súsw-i íyuula
 9SM-extinguish-PFV 9.rain
 ‘the rain has put it out’ / ‘it was put out by the rain’

As in other Bantu languages, such as Northern Sotho (Zerbian 2006) or Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2008), subject inversion in Matengo is used for detopicalisation of the subject, whether to form athetic sentence or subject focus (see Marten & Van der Wal (to appear) for an overview of subject inversion in Bantu). Thetic sentences are defined as topicless sentences (Sasse 1996, Lambrecht 2000), which are often used presentationally, at the beginning of stories, and in an out-of-the-blue context. Narrow focus on the subject can be seen in a question-answer pair that inquires after the subject. Either reading is possible in Matengo inversions, as indicated by the two contexts in (19).⁷

- (19) juí áana
 1SM.die.PFV 1.Anna
 ‘Anna died’
 I. out of the blue
 II. as an answer to ‘who died?’

With respect to the inversion of the subject, then, we conclude that it expresses detopicalisation of the subject, which is one of the main functions of passives as well.

With respect to the object, an omitted or preposed object is said to be topical (Yoneda 2011), just as the patient becomes the topic in a prototypical passive. The preposed object thus shares this information-structural function with the passive. As to its syntactic structure, so far it has only been shown that the object can appear in a non-canonical, *linearly* preverbal position. However, the linear position of the object does not necessarily tell us anything about its structural position, which could be dislocated or clause-internal. This is relevant to the current discussion because preverbal patients in a canonical passive are not dislocated (they

⁷ Prosody does not play a role in distinguishing these two readings, as far as is known at the moment – though see Yoneda (2009) on the possible effects of the conjoint/disjoint alternation.

function as clause-internal subjects), as opposed to topicalised fronted objects, which are often dislocated. Although no in-depth analysis will be given on dislocation versus (pseudo) passives (see Hamlaoui & Makasso 2013 for this discussion in Bâsâá), there are four potential diagnostics to determine whether the preverbal object in Matengo is in a non-dislocated position, which will be discussed in turn.

The first concerns object marking. As a topic, one may expect the preverbal object to be object-marked on the verb, as is the case in numerous other Bantu languages (Givón 1976, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987, among others). However, object marking of the omitted (20) or preposed object (21) is not obligatory in Matengo: (O)VS order is grammatical with (a) and without (b) an object marker.

- (20) ('What happened to the sheep?')
- a. ju-kaang-iki aísha
1SM-push-PFV 1.Aisha
- b. ju-**ga**-kaang-iki aísha
1SM-6OM-push-PFV 1.Aisha
'Aisha pushed them' / 'they were pushed by Aisha'
- (21) a. likoólú i-kula íngooko
5.vegetables 10SM-eat 10.chickens
'the chickens eat vegetables' /
'vegetables are eaten by the chickens'
- b. likoólú i-**lí**-kula íngooko
5.vegetables 10SM-5OM-eat 10.chickens
'the chickens eat the vegetables' /
'the vegetables are eaten by the chickens'

Instead, object marking in Matengo interacts with animacy (Yoneda 2008) and seems to also relate to definiteness/specificity, as in (21) above and (22) below. More detailed research is needed, but it is clear that object marking does not correlate with topicality or sentence position of the marked object in Matengo.

- (22) a. tu-bó-ichi méesa
1PL.SM-move-PFV 6.table
'we moved a table'

- b. tu-ji-bó-ichi méesa
 1PL.SM-6OM-move-PFV 6.table
 ‘we moved the/a specific table’

Yoneda (2010) provides an interesting example of the disambiguating use of the object marker in the case of a human subject and a human object, which can logically be OVS or SVO:

- (23) a. Tomi ju-kom-iti Samueli.
 1.Tom 1SM-kill-PFV 1.Samuel
 ‘Tom, Samueli has killed (him)’ /
 ‘Tom has been killed by Samuel’
- b. Tomi ju-**mu**-kom-iti Samueli.
 1.Tom 1SM-1OM-kill-PFV 1.Samuel
 ‘Tom has killed Samuel.’
 (Yoneda 2010: 318)

However, I found that a similar sentence with an indefinite noun phrase and an object marker was judged to be ambiguous:

- (24) múúndú a-n-kom-ichi Tóomu
 1.person 1SM-1OM-kill-PFV 1.Tom
 a. ‘Tom killed someone’ / ‘someone was killed by Tom’
 b. ‘someone killed Tom’

In summary, the presence or absence of object marking does not seem to influence the possibility of preposing an object or its topical interpretation. In addition, it is not informative for the structural position of the preposed object as (non-)dislocated.

The second diagnostic for the structural position of the object is the fact that there is no obligatory pause between the preposed object and the verb, as seen in (16), repeated below as (25a). Third, and related, it seems possible for the preposed object to be phrased in one phonological phrase with the verb and postverbal subject, though this is not obligatory. The phonological phrasing is seen in the marking of the right boundary of the phonological phrase: the penultimate syllable of the preposed object is lengthened in (25b), but not in (25a). These prosodic facts suggest that the preposed object can occur in a non-dislocated position.

- (25) a. lindilísá ju-hogw-i Jóni
 5.window 1SM-open-PFV 1.John
 ‘the window was opened by John’
- b. lindilísa | ju-hogw-i Jóni
 5.window 1SM-PAST-open-PFV 1.John
 ‘the window, it has been opened by John/John opened it’

Fourth, the preverbal object can be indefinite and non-specific, as in (26). Since non-specifics cannot be topicalised, this also suggest that it occupies a non-dislocated position.

- (26) siindú sookápí ju-a-hem-í Malía
 7.thing 7.any 1SM-PAST-buy-PFV 1.Maria
 ‘something was bought by Maria’

It is thus probable that the preposed object is in a non-dislocated position, which makes them more similar to passives on this property than to left dislocation constructions. Furthermore, the non-dislocated position is relevant in the light of a diachronic development from a dislocated, topicalised DP (‘the window, John opened it’) to a passive construction in which the preverbal patient is not dislocated (‘the window was opened’), as Bostoen & Mundeke (2011) also indicate for Mbuun, and Hamlaoui & Makasso (2013) for Bàsàá. Although more research is needed, for example in testing the iterativity of preverbal topics, object preposing in Matengo does not seem as advanced as the other languages mentioned, but could attest to an intermediate stage in grammaticalisation towards a morphologically unmarked passive (cf. Cobbinah & Lüpke 2012).

A question is to what extent the logically independent processes of object-preposing (OV) and subject inversion (VS) “cooperate” or influence each other. A topical object can either be preposed or simply be omitted; in the latter case the resulting VS order still expresses non-topicality of the subject and topicality of the object. Conversely, in the presence of a pronominal subject and a preposed object, the result is a simple OV order (27b), which can also be translated as a passive.

- (27) a. tw-a-bó-ichi méesa VO
 1PL.SM-PAST-move-PFV 9.table
 ‘we moved a/the table’

- b. meésá tw-a-bó-ífiche OV
 9.table 1PL.SM-PAST-move-PFV
 ‘the table, we moved it’ / ‘the table was moved by us’

In summary, subject inversion shares with the passive the property of detopicalising the agent/subject, whereas object preposing shares the property of topicalising the patient/object. The two strategies can therefore easily be combined to give two information-structural effects typically present in a passive as well. What is special about subject inversion with respect to the other strategies is, first, the fact that the subject is expressed as a DP, and second, that it is underspecified as non-topical, which allows for an interpretation as the (new information or contrastive) focus.

4. Third person

A third strategy to convey a meaning that could in English be rendered as a passive is the use of a class 2 subject marker, class 2 being the plural of the class that contains mostly humans and thus translatable as an impersonal ‘they’ (3PL), cf. Keenan & Dryer (2007). Although this third person/class 2 strategy is offered naturally as a translation of a passive sentence, it does not function as a full passive –as it does in Bemba (Kula & Marten 2010) and other Bantu languages.⁸ In Bemba, the agent DP can optionally be present in a ‘by’ phrase (28), but this is ungrammatical in Matengo (29). Instead, the preposition is interpreted as a comitative ‘with’.

Bemba (Kula & Marten 2010: 118)

- (28) bá-alí-poosa ífy-ákulya (ku bá-ána)
 2SM-PAST-throw 7-food by 2-children
 ‘the food was thrown away by the children’

- (29) a. kitáábu a-hánd-ífiche
 7.book 2SM-write-PFV
 ‘a book is written’
- b. kitaabu a-hand-iki na Peter
 7.book 2SM-write-PFV with 1.Peter
 ‘a book they wrote with Peter’
 * ‘a book was written by Peter’

⁸ Kula & Marten (2010), Bostoen & Mundeke (2011), and Hamlaoui & Makasso (2013) refer to the following sources as describing a 3PL passive in various Bantu languages: Stappers 1967, Givón 1979, Givón & Kawasha (2006), Meeuwis (2010), Mukash-Kalel (2004), Morrison (1906), Horton (1949), Kawasha (2007).

This implies that in Matengo the class 2 subject marker is still seen as the subject and agent. Hence, these constructions are ambiguous between an active 3PL reading (30bI) and a passive reading (30bII). As such they are similar to the impersonal 3PL strategy in Mbuun (Bostoen & Mundeke 2011), as illustrated by the two interpretations in (31).

Matengo

- (30) a. muundú a-n-kóm-íche
 1.person 2SM-1OM-kill-PFV
 ‘someone was killed’
- b. a-n-kom-ichi múundo
 2SM-1OM-kill-PFV 1.person
 I. ‘they killed someone’
 (“these guys, what have they done?”)
 II. ‘someone was killed’
 (“what happened here?”)

Mbuun (Bostoen & Mundeke 2011: 83)

- (31) mbaa baa bá-(é)dzim-i
 9.fire 2.PRO 2SM-9OM-extinguish-PFV
 I. ‘the fire, they have extinguished (it)’
 II. ‘the fire has been extinguished (by them)’

What the 3PL strategy has in common with the prototypical passive is that the agent is demoted, in this case by being replaced by an impersonal subject.

The 3PL strategy, too, can be combined with object preposing. The order of verb and object (OV/VO) depends on the information-structural status of the object: as mentioned in the previous section, preverbal objects are topical (32a), as opposed to postverbal objects, which are not topical (32b).

- (32) a. (‘Have they finished writing a/the book?’)
 kitáabo a-léemb-íchi
 7.book 2SM-write-PFV
 ‘they’ve written a/the book’ / ‘the book has been written’

- b. ('What has been written?' / 'What have they written?')
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| a-leemb-ichi | kitáabo |
| 2SM-write-PFV | 7.book |
| 'they've written a book' | |

In summary, the 3PL strategy is ambiguous between a passive and active interpretation, it does not allow for the overt expression of the agent –it is impersonal, and the object can be topical or non-topical/focal depending on its linear position. All these properties are again illustrated in the question-answer pair in (33).

- (33) a. kujííku a-tel-ikí chíiche?
- | | | |
|---|--------------|--------|
| 17.kitchen | 2SM-cook-PFV | 7.what |
| 'what is being cooked in the kitchen?' | | |
| 'what are they cooking in the kitchen?' | | |
- b. a-télik-i cháae.
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| 2SM-cook-PFV | 7.tea |
| 'tea was made'/'they cooked tea' | |
- c. * atéliki cháí ná Jókha
- | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|----|-------|
| 2SM-cook-PFV | 7.tea | by | Jokha |
| 'tea was made by Jokha' | | | |

It should be pointed out that it is equally ungrammatical to express the agent overtly without a preposition, as in (34a). In elicitation, this sentence was quickly corrected to an inversion construction, either by changing to a class 2 subject, keeping the subject marker in class 2 (34b), or by changing the subject marker to agreement in class 1 with the postverbal subject (34c). As the overt expression of an agent DP is never allowed in the 3PL strategy, these inversions cannot be confused with the 3PL strategy.

- (34) a. * meésá b-a-bó-ichi Jóni
- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------|
| 9.table | 2SM-PAST-move-PFV | 1.John |
| 'the table was moved by John' | | |
- b. meésá b-a-bó-ichi ambúuja
- | | | |
|--|-------------------|------------------|
| 9.table | 2SM-PAST-move-PFV | 2.grandmother(s) |
| 'the table was moved by grandma(s)' ⁹ | | |

⁹ Class 2 *ambuja* can be used as a respectful singular or a plural.

- c. meésá ju-a-bó-ichi Jóni
 9.table 1SM-PAST-move-PFV 1.John
 ‘the table was moved by John’

In section 3, the status of the preverbal object was addressed, its linear position being compatible with being dislocated or non-dislocated. As mentioned, this is relevant in the current discussion because the preverbal patient/subject in a passive construction is not dislocated. There are three pieces of evidence that the preverbal object in the 3PL strategy too is in a non-dislocated position. First, the preverbal object can be weakly quantified, as shown for ‘few’ in (35a,b), respectively with and without object marker.

- (35) a. mákondóo másokopi a-ga-káanj-íche
 6.sheep 6-few 2SM-6OM-push-PFV
 ‘few sheep have been pushed’
- b. mákondóo másokopi a-káanj-íche
 6.sheep 6-few 2SM-push-PFV
 ‘few sheep have been pushed’

As weak quantifiers often behave as indefinites (Diesing 1992), which cannot be topicalised, this suggests a non-dislocated position of the preverbal object.

Second, the preverbal object is not followed by a pause, and third, there is no lengthening of the penultimate vowel (*masokopi*, not *-koopí*), which indicates that the preverbal object is in one phonological phrase with the following word. A non-dislocated position of the preposed object suggests that it is in this respect similar to the passive.

For completeness, it is noted that with a ditransitive predicate, either object can be fronted in the 3PL strategy, as illustrated for the recipient in (37) and the patient in (38).

- (36) ba-péchi ambúja káanga
 2SM.2OM-give-PFV 2.grandma 9.cloth
 ‘they gave grandma a cloth’
- (37) a. ambúja ba-pechí chíche?
 2.grandma 2SM.2OM-give-PFV 7.what
 ‘what was grandma given?’ / ‘what did they give grandma?’

- b. ambúja ba-pechi káanga (* na Aísha)
 2.grandma 2SM.2OM-give-PFV 9.cloth by 1.Aisha
 ‘grandma was given a cloth (by Aisha)’
- (38) a. káángá ji-bí kwaáko?
 9.cloth 9SM-be where
 ‘where is the cloth?’
- b. káángá baa-péch-i ambúuja
 9.cloth 2SM.2OM-give-PFV 2.grandma
 ‘the cloth was given grandmother’ /
 ‘the cloth, they gave it to grandma’
- c. baa-péch-i ambúuja
 2SM.2OM-give-PFV 2.grandma
 ‘it was given grandma’ / ‘they gave it to grandma’

In summary, the 3PL strategy serves to demote the agent, and can be combined with object preposing (patient topicalisation) to capture two of the properties typically associated with passives.

5. Discussion and conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction and shown in the description of the various strategies, there are two syntactic and two information-structural properties that are central to passive and passive-like constructions. Table 2 provides an overview of these properties and shows which are found in the four strategies discussed for Matengo.

	syntactic promotion patient to S	syntactic demotion agent	promotion patient to topic	demotion agent to non-topic
passive	+	+	+	+
stative	+	+	-	+
VS order	-	-	-	+
3PL	-	-	-	+
OV order	-	-	+	-

Table 2 Syntactic and information-structural characteristics of passive¹⁰

The typical passive combines the syntactic as well as the information-structural changes for both the agent and the patient, whereas the strategies found in Matengo only display a subset, but crucially share some characteristics of the passive.

The stative extension has in common with a canonical passive that the agent is removed from the argument structure of the verb (or at least demoted) and hence can be neither subject nor topic. Furthermore, the patient is now the syntactic subject of the stative verb. Nevertheless, it is not necessarily the topic, as the subject in Matengo can occur in pre- or postverbal position depending on its topical status.

The subject inversion strategy (VS) also demotes the agent, but only pragmatically, not grammatically: the agent is no longer the topic, but still fulfils the syntactic subject function. Being non-topical, the inversion can be used inthetic sentences as well as subject focus.

The third person subject marker strategy also demotes the agent by making it an impersonal third person plural ‘they’, but the demotion is again only in information-structural function, not syntactic.

The complementary word order change, OV order, has in common with a canonical passive that the patient is promoted to topic function,¹¹ but it still functions syntactically as the object, unlike in the passive. The combination of object preposing with either subject inversion or 3PL covers the two information-structural functions of the passive.

The overview does not show the difference between subject inversion and the 3PL strategy: both demote the agent only in the information-structural function by detopicalising it. The inherent difference between the two, however, is that subject inversion requires a full DP agent, whereas the agent is pronominal in the 3PL strategy. This small difference has as a consequence that only in the subject inversion strategy can the agent be interpreted as new or focal information.

From a crosslinguistic perspective, Matengo subject inversion and object preposing add a further possibility to the strategies discussed by Hamlaoui & Makasso (2013). Specifically, in the Matengo (OV)/(VS) order the subject marker on the verb still agrees with the subject. This is unlike patient inversion constructions in languages like Luguru, Ha, Rwanda and Rundi (cf. Kimenyi 1980, Ndayiragije 1999, Morimoto 2006), where the

¹⁰ See Hamlaoui & Makasso (2013) for a comparison of strategies differing in the promotion and demotion of object and subject.

¹¹ The possibility of having a non-specific preverbal object suggests that the typical topical interpretation may be expanding to include non-prototypical preverbal noun phrases as well.

word order is OVS as well, but the subject marker agrees with the preverbal patient, as illustrated in (39).

Luguru (Mkude 1974: 133)

- (39) a. Imw-ana ka-tula ici-ya.
 1-child 1SM-broke 7-pot
 ‘The child broke the pot.’
- b. Ici-ya ci-tula imw-ana.
 7-pot 7SM-broke 1-child
 ‘The child broke the pot.’
 (Lit.: ‘The pot broke the child.’)

It also differs from pseudo-passives in Mbuun (40) and Bàsàá, where agreement is with the subject, but the word order is OSV, not OVS. This may reflect a difference in topicality: whereas the postverbal subject in Matengo assumes a non-topical role, the preverbal subject in Mbuun can still be seen as a topic.

Mbuun (Bostoen & Mundeke 2011: 76)

- (40) a. maam o-á-kón á-saŋ SVO
 mother 1SM-PRES-plant 6-millet
 ‘Mother plants millet.’
- b. a-sáŋ maam o-á-(á-)kon OSV
 6-millet mother 1SM-PRES-(6OM-)plant
 ‘Millet is planted by mother.’ / ‘Millet, mother plants it.’

Matengo also differs from Bàsàá in not having a strict mapping requirement for the syntactic subject to encode the highest thematic role, as Hamlaoui & Makasso (2013) claim. In the stative strategy, for example, it is possible for the patient to be the subject and the cause to be expressed in a by-phrase.

With respect to the broader picture issues, these conclusions on the prototypical passive and the strategies that at first sight have no relation with passives show that it is important to take into account not only the syntactic functions but also the information-structural functions in order to see how the passive and the other strategies partly overlap in their use.

The fact that the various properties associated with the passive can occur separately from one another supports a prototype typology of passives as Cobbinah & Lüpke (2009) propose, whereby some strategies display more passive properties than others do. They argue that not all constructions

that can function as passives necessarily have passive morphology, and that a definition of ‘passive’ should be grounded in comparative syntactic research and be more liberal (as a prototype account is). The current paper differs from theirs, however, in also including the information-structural functions. This is not to say that all strategies that have one or more properties in common with the prototypical passive should also be considered a passive, but it shows yet again that the syntactic and functional definitions of passives yield different groups of phenomena.

It is obvious that much work remains to be done. First, we would like to know more about the different strategies in Matengo: can all predicates be used in all strategies? In which natural context is which strategy preferred (corpus-based research)? Second, a cross-Bantu study of the various strategies used to convey a passive-like meaning (i.e. one or more of the alternations in Table 2) could bring to light not only the expected wide variation in the morphosyntax of these languages, but may also suggest grammaticalisation paths and innovations in different languages. Third, how can object preposing in these constructions shed light on A versus A-bar movement? Fourth, as Bantu syntax is generally influenced by information structure, further research into Bantu passives should take into account not just the syntactic but also the information-structural properties of passive(-like) structures.

Abbreviations

APPL	applicative
FS	final suffix
OM	object marker
PASS	passive extension
PAST	past tense
PFV	perfective
POSS	possessive
PRES	present tense
PRO	independent pronoun
SM	subject marker
STAT	stative extension

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